

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSC-05

PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05

TRSE-00 SAJ-01 NSA-01 AEC-05 MC-01 CU-02 EB-04 /074 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6245

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USBERLIN

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

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BERLIN FOR AMBASSADOR

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MPOL, PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S BUSY FALL

BEGIN SUMMARY: FRG DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER HAS BEEN A BUSY MAN THIS FALL. THE NOVEMBER 4-5 VISIT OF SECDEF SCHLESINGER IS CONSIDERED BY THE GERMANS TO HAVE GONE EXCEPTIONALLY WELL. LEBER HAS BEGUN TO PREPARE GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION FOR THE POSSIBLE REDUCTION OF THE U.S. TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPON STOCKPILE IN EUROPE. HE HAS

ALSO BEEN MUCH IN THE NEWS DEFENDING HIS PROPOSED REFORM OF THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR EXAMINATION AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE BUNDESWEHR. LEBER HAS ALSO BEEN A

STRONG ADVOCATE OF THE TRI-NATIONAL MRCA PROJECT. LEBER'S REPUTATION AS DEFENSE MINISTER HAS GROWN STEADILY DURING HIS TENURE IN OFFICE AND WE ANTICIPATE HE WILL REMAIN AT LEAST UNTIL THE END OF THE LEGISLATIVE PERIOD IN 1976. END SUMMARY

1. FRG DEFENSE MINISTER GEORG LEBER HAS BEEN A BUSY MAN THIS FALL.

THE LATEST AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT ITEM ON LEBER'S AGENDA

WAS THE OFFICIAL

VISIT WHICH SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER PAID TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC ON NOVEMBER 4 AND 5. GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTERS ARE SINCERELY APPRECIATIVE OF VISITS BY THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS, AND LEBER IS NO EXCEPTION. HEARING WORDS OF REASSURANCE AND SUPPORT DIRECTLY FROM A KEY AMERICAN POLICYMAKER IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO GERMAN EARS. OUR CONTACTS IN FMOD BELIEVE THE VISIT WENT EXCEPTIONALLY WELL. FOLLOWING SECDEF'S DEPARTURE, CONFIDENTIAL

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LEBER WAS ASKED BY REPORTERS ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEPLOYMENT STUDY CURRENTLY BEING PREPARED IN THE PENTAGON UNDER THE SPUR OF THE NUNN AMENDMENT. LEBER REPLIED IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THE SIZE OF THE AMERICAN TACTICAL NUCLEAR STOCKPILE DEPLOYED IN EUROPE MIGHT BE REDUCED. LEBER SAID THIS WOULD BE

ACCEPTABLE, ARGUING THAT IT IS NOT THE SIZE BUT RATHER

THE QUALITY OF THE STOCKPILE THAT REALLY MATTERS. THE DEFENSE MINISTER WENT ON TO DEFEND THE POSSIBLE CHANGE AS BEING A LOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN MEETING THE ALLIANCE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO EVALUATE CONSTANTLY ITS EVER-CHANGING REQUIREMENTS.

2. SEVERAL TIMES THIS FALL THE GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTER HAS DISCUSSED HIS PLAN TO RESTRUCTURE THE BUNDESWEHR. THE SCHLESINGER VISIT GAVE LEBER AN OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE THE THEME THAT THE ADDITION OF THREE NEW BRIGADES TO THE BUNDESWEHR - FOR A TOTAL OF 36 - WOULD MAKE IT A MORE POTENT FIGHTING FORCE. LEBER TAKES ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND HIS SCHEME FOR A "STANDBY READINESS" FORCE OF 30,000 MEN. THE IDEA BEHIND THIS RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL IS TO PERMIT THE FRG TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN EQUIPMENT TO INSURE THAT THE BUNDESWEHR WILL BE ARMED WITH THE MOST MODERN WEAPONS IN THE 1980'S. LEBER'S "STANDBY READINESS" CONCEPT HAS NOT YET BEEN APPROVED BY THE BUNDESTAG, AND THERE ARE RUMBLINGS OF DISCONTENT WITHIN THE CDU/CSU REGARDING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT SUCH A REDUCTION OF "FORCES-IN-BEING" MIGHT HAVE IN LIGHT OF THE ONGOING WARSAW PACT BUILDUP.

3. LEBER'S CURRENT BATTLE WITH THE BUNDESTAG OVER HIS PLAN TO REFORM THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR EXAMINATION HAS ALSO BEEN A PROMINENT FEATURE THIS FALL. THE DEFENSE MINISTER GRANTED A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS TO

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AMCONSUL STUTTGART
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VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS IN WHICH HE DISCUSSED THE ISSUE. THE
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PRINCIPAL BURDEN OF LEBER'S ARGUMENT IS THAT THE TIME
HAS COME FOR A THOROUGHGOING REFORM OF THE CONSCIENTIOUS
OBJECTOR PROCEDURE. LEFT-WING MEMBERS OF THE GOVERN-
MENT COALITION FEEL THAT LEBER'S DRAFT PROPOSAL DOES
NOT GO FAR ENOUGH WHEREAS THE OPPOSITION BELIEVES IT
GOES TOO FAR. LEBER'S PROPOSAL COMES AT A TIME WHEN
THE ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS HAS
RISEN TO ITS HIGHEST POINT EVER (APPROXIMATELY 35,000
ANNUALLY). STATISTICS FROM THE FIRST HALF OF 1974
INDICATE THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER THIS YEAR SHOULD BE
SLIGHTLY LESS THAN IN 1973. ANOTHER FAVORABLE FACTOR
IS THAT WHILE THE ABSOLUTE NUMBER HAS RISEN EVERY YEAR
SINCE 1963, THE PERCENTAGE OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS
RELATIVE TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PROSPECTIVE DRAFTEES
HAS DECLINED SLIGHTLY THE PAST TWO YEARS. LEBER IS
HOPEFUL THE BUNDESWEHR HAS TURNED THE CORNER ON THIS
PROBLEM. THE HEART OF HIS DRAFT PROPOSAL IS THAT

THERE WILL BE A LARGE ENOUGH POOL OF YOUNG MEN AVAILABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE BUNDESWEHR EVEN IF THEY ARE GRANTED THE RIGHT FREELY TO SELECT EITHER MILITARY OR CIVILIAN SERVICE.

4. ANOTHER FAVORABLE SIGN THE PAST FEW MONTHS IS THE FACT THAT THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS FOR THE BUNDESWEHR HAS INCREASED. THE BUNDESWEHR NOW FINDS ITSELF IN THE ENVIABLE POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO PICK AND CHOOSE AMONG APPLICANTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ASPIRE EVENTUALLY TO ATTAIN OFFICER STATUS. ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTORS BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS CHANGE IS THE CURRENT UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE FRG. THE BUNDESWEHR OFFERS A MEASURE OF SECURITY TO THE YOUNG MAN OR WOMAN CONCERNED ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE CIVILIAN SECTOR. MOREOVER, FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO BECOME OFFICERS, BUNDESWEHR UNIVERSITIES OFFER A MEANS OF ATTENDING A SCHOOL OF HIGHER LEARNING WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE BE DENIED BECAUSE OF THE "NUMERUS CLAUSUS" PROBLEM WHICH LIMITS THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AT CIVILIAN UNIVERSITIES.

5. FINALLY, LAST SEPTEMBER, LEBER WAS HIGHLY VISIBLE IN CONNECTION WITH THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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MULTIROLE AIRCRAFT (MRCA) WHICH WAS PUBLICLY UNVEILED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MUNICH IN SEPTEMBER. LEBER WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN GETTING THE FEDERAL CABINET TO AGREE TO RELEASE ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUIRED FOR PREPRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT OF THE AIRCRAFT. PRIOR TO THE DECISIVE MEETING, LEBER HAD A LARGE SCALE MODEL OF THE AIRCRAFT INSTALLED IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE THE MEETING ROOM. A POLITICAL CARTOON AT THE TIME SHOWED LEBER FLYING PAPER MONEY MRCA'S DURING THE MEETING WITH CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WHISPERING TO HIS AIDE TO PUT HIS TOYS AWAY. THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT LEBER BELIEVES THE MRCA IS A VIABLE PROJECT, AND THAT THE AIRCRAFT WILL EVENTUALLY ENTER THE GERMAN, BRITISH AND ITALIAN AIR FORCES. CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE BUNDESTAG ARE LESS SANGUINE ABOUT THE JOINT PROJECT, AND THE DECISION TO RELEASE FUNDS WAS CAVEATED TO THE EXTENT THAT A FINAL DECISION MUST STILL BE TAKEN BEFORE A PRODUCTION RUN OF THE AIRCRAFT IS AUTHORIZED. LEBER WAS FULSOME WITH HIS PRAISE OF THE AIRCRAFT DURING ITS PUBLIC DEBUT, SO MUCH SO THAT THE OPPOSITION CHARGED HIS STATEMENTS WERE PREJUDICIAL TO THE FINAL DECISION.

6. LEBER STILL POSSESSES A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE WITHIN SPD COUNCILS, RETAINING MEMBERSHIP

IN THE PARTY DIRECTORATE. PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THIS POWER BASE, RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING IN BONN THAT HE MAY BE THE MAN TO REPLACE CURRENT SPD MINISTER-PRESIDENT OSSWALD IN HESSEN WHOSE FORCES SUFFERED A BAD DEFEAT IN THE RECENT STATE ELECTION. WE REPEAT THAT THIS IS ONLY A RUMOR, BUT IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT LEBER COULD BE ENTRUSTED WITH THIS RESPONSIBILITY WERE HE TO RECEIVE THE PARTY'S CALL.

7. COMMENT: LEBER'S REPUTATION AS DEFENSE MINISTER HAS GROWN STEADILY DURING HIS TENURE IN OFFICE. WHILE INITIALLY UNSURE OF HIMSELF, LEBER HAS GROWN IN CONFIDENCE AND HAS WON THE RESPECT OF THE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY WHOM HE DIRECTS ON THE HARDTHOEHE, THE GERMAN PENTAGON. WE ANTICIPATE HE WILL CONTINUE IN HIS POSITION AS DEFENSE MINISTER AT LEAST UNTIL THE END OF THE LEGISLATIVE PERIOD IN 1976. END COMMENT
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